

# INDIAN NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS

VOL. II



No. 2

A SERIES OF PUBLICA-  
TIONS RELATING TO THE  
AMERICAN ABORIGINES

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## AN IROQUOIS ANTLER FIGURINE

BY  
ALANSON SKINNER

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NEW YORK  
MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN  
HEYE FOUNDATION

1920

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THIS series of INDIAN NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS is devoted primarily to the publication of the results of studies by members of the staff of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, and is uniform with HISPANIC NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS, published by the Hispanic Society of America, with which organization this Museum is in cordial coöperation.





AN IROQUOIS ANTLER  
FIGURINE

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IROQUOIS ANTLER FIGURINE  
(Height,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  in.)



## AN IROQUOIS ANTLER FIGURINE

By ALANSON SKINNER



**T**HIS antler figurine, which still retains the high polish due to much handling, was found in an ash-bed on an ancient Wenro Indian village-site on Buffalo creek, just west of the town line in East Elma, New York.

The figure seems to have been intended for suspension, perhaps as a pendant from a necklace, as its neck is perforated from side to side in such manner that, however hung, it would always face outward. The hands—one raised, the other resting on the pelvis—are in a position characteristic of those of Iroquois bone images. Although the figure is represented as nude, the fact that the hair is gathered in a queue or braid behind reveals something of Wenro customs, valuable because this Iroquoian

tribe was so early exterminated that few of their artifacts have found their way into museum collections.

Among the present-day Seneca, in whom, history tells us, still courses some Wenro blood, it is said that their ancestors, if indeed the custom is not still maintained in secret, utilized similar bone images in the practice of witchcraft, and bone and antler figurines have been obtained in the ash-beds and graves of their ancient sites.

Such bone and antler images, however, are exceedingly rare, for of the thousands of specimens of these materials from the several known Iroquois tribes, fewer than a dozen figurines have been reported, and of these the one here referred to is the best.

*Consult:* BEAUCHAMP, William H., Horn and Bone Implements of the New York Indians, *Bulletin 50, New York State Museum*, p. 283, Albany, 1902. PARKER, Arthur C., Report of the New York State Archeologist, for 1913, p. 95, pl. opp. p. 96, Albany, 1913.



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